

gained any economic benefit as a result of a failure to comply. For any violation which continues for two or more days and which is assigned more than 70 points under §845.13(b), the Office shall assess a penalty for a minimum of two separate days.

(b) In addition to the civil penalty provided for in paragraph (a), whenever a violation contained in a notice of violation or cessation order has not been abated within the abatement period set in the notice or order or as subsequently extended pursuant to section 521(a) of the Act, a civil penalty of not less than \$825 shall be assessed for each day during which such failure to abate continues, except that:

(1)(i) If suspension of the abatement requirements of the notice or order is ordered in a temporary relief proceeding under section 525(c) of the Act, after a determination that the person to whom the notice or order was issued will suffer irreparable loss or damage from the application of the requirements, the period permitted for abatement shall not end until the date on which the Office of Hearings and Appeals issues a final order with respect to the violation in question; and

(ii) If the person to whom the notice or order was issued initiates review proceedings under section 526 of the Act with respect to the violation, in which the obligations to abate are suspended by the court pursuant to section 526(c) of the Act, the daily assessment of a penalty shall not be made for any period before entry of a final order by the court;

(2) Such penalty for the failure to abate the violation shall not be assessed for more than 30 days for each such violation. If the permittee has not abated the violation within the 30-day period, the Office shall take appropriate action pursuant to section 518(e), 518(f), 521(a)(4), or 521(c) of the Act within 30 days to ensure that abatement occurs or to ensure that there will not be a reoccurrence of the failure to abate.

[47 FR 35640, Aug. 16, 1982, as amended at 62 FR 63277, Nov. 28, 1997]

§ 845.16 Waiver of use of formula to determine civil penalty.

(a) The Director, upon his own initiative or upon written request received within 15 days of issuance of a notice of violation or a cessation order, may waive the use of the formula contained in 30 CFR 845.13 to set the civil penalty, if he or she determines that, taking into account exceptional factors present in the particular case, the penalty is demonstrably unjust. However, the Director shall not waive the use of the formula or reduce the proposed assessment on the basis of an argument that a reduction in the proposed penalty could be used to abate violations of the Act, this chapter, any applicable program, or any condition of any permit or exploration approval. The basis for every waiver shall be fully explained and documented in the records of the case.

(b) If the Director waives the use of the formula, he or she shall use the criteria set forth in 30 CFR 845.13(b) to determine the appropriate penalty. When the Director has elected to waive the use of the formula, he or she shall give a written explanation of the basis for the assessment made to the person to whom the notice or order was issued.

§ 845.17 Procedures for assessment of civil penalties.

(a) Within 15 days of service of a notice or order, the person to whom it was issued may submit written information about the violation to the Office and to the inspector who issued the notice of violation or cessation order. The Office shall consider any information so submitted in determining the facts surrounding the violation and the amount of the penalty.

(b) The Office shall serve a copy of the proposed assessment and of the work sheet showing the computation of the proposed assessment on the person to whom the notice or order was issued, by certified mail, or by any alternative means consistent with the rules governing service of a summons or complaint under rule 4 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, within 30 days of the issuance of the notice or order.

(1) If a copy of the proposed assessment and work sheet or the certified

mail is tendered at the address of that person required under 30 CFR 816.11, or at any address at which that person is in fact located, and he or she refuses to accept delivery of or to collect such documents, the requirements of this paragraph shall be deemed to have been complied with upon such tender.

(2) Failure by the Office to serve any proposed assessment within 30 days shall not be grounds for dismissal of all or part of such assessment unless the person against whom the proposed penalty has been assessed—

(i) Proves actual prejudice as a result of the delay; and,

(ii) Makes a timely objection to the delay. An objection shall be timely only if made in the normal course of administrative review.

(c) Unless a conference has been requested, the Office shall review and reassess any penalty if necessary to consider facts which were not reasonably available on the date of issuance of the proposed assessment because of the length of the abatement period. The Office shall serve a copy of any such reassessment and of the worksheet showing the computation of the reassessment in the manner provided in paragraph (b), within 30 days after the date the violation is abated.

[47 FR 35640, Aug. 16, 1982, as amended at 56 FR 28446, June 20, 1991]

§ 845.18 Procedures for assessment conference.

(a) The Office shall arrange for a conference to review the proposed assessment or reassessment, upon written request of the person to whom the notice or order was issued, if the request is received within 30 days from the date the proposed assessment or reassessment is received.

(b)(1) The Office shall assign a conference officer to hold the assessment conference. The assessment conference shall not be governed by section 554 of title 5 of the United States Code, regarding requirements for formal adjudicatory hearings. The assessment conference shall be held within 60 days from the date the conference request is received or the end of the abatement period, whichever is later: *Provided*, That a failure by the Office to hold such conference within 60 days shall

not be grounds for dismissal of all or part of an assessment unless the person against whom the proposed penalty has been assessed proves actual prejudice as a result of the delay.

(2) The Office shall post notice of the time and place of the conference at the State or field office closest to the mine at least 5 days before the conference. Any person shall have a right to attend and participate in the conference.

(3) The conference officer shall consider all relevant information on the violation. Within 30 days after the conference is held, the conference officer shall either:

(i) Settle the issues, in which case a settlement agreement shall be prepared and signed by the conference officer on behalf of the Office and by the person assessed; or

(ii) Affirm, raise, lower, or vacate the penalty.

(4) An increase or reduction of a proposed civil penalty assessment of more than 25 percent and more than \$500 shall not be final and binding on the Secretary, until approved by the Director or his or her designee.

(c) The conference officer shall promptly serve the person assessed with a notice of his or her action in the manner provided in 30 CFR 845.17(b) and shall include a worksheet if the penalty has been raised or lowered. The reasons for the conference officer's action shall be fully documented in the file.

(d)(1) If a settlement agreement is entered into, the person assessed will be deemed to have waived all rights to further review of the violation or penalty in question, except as otherwise expressly provided for in the settlement agreement. The settlement agreement shall contain a clause to this effect.

(2) If full payment of the amount specified in the settlement agreement is not received by the Office within 30 days after the date of signing, the Office may enforce the agreement or rescind it and proceed according to paragraph (b)(3)(ii) within 30 days from the date of the rescission.

(e) The conference officer may terminate the conference when he or she determines that the issues cannot be resolved or that the person assessed is